

144 Polit. Pamphlet vol 108 22
MARMOR NORFOLCIENSE :

OR AN

ESSAY

ON AN

ANCIENT PROPHETICAL
INSCRIPTION,

In Monkish Rhyme,

Lately Discover'd near LYNN in
NORFOLK.

By PROBUS BRITANICUS.

*Dr. Samuel
Johnson*



L O N D O N :

Printed for J. BRETT at the Golden-Ball,
opposite St. Clement's Church in the Strand.
MDCCLXXXIX,

*Johnson's life by the author
originally revised vol 53 P 360
Brownell's life of Johnson 1774*

MARMON NORTHAMPTON

OF A

ESSAYS

ANALYTICAL
INSCRIPTION

in the



THE

OF

BY



LONDON

Printed for J. Smith at the ...
opposite St. ...



A N
E S S A Y
O N A N
ANCIENT INSCRIPTION Dis-
cover'd near *Lynn* in *Norfolk*.



N *Norfolk* near the Town
of *Lynn*, in a Field which
an ancient Tradition of the
Country affirms to have
been once a deep Lake
or Meer, and which appears from
authentick Records to have been call'd,
about two hundred Years ago, *Palus*,
or the Marsh, was discover'd not long
since a large square Stone, which is
found upon an exact Inspection to be a
kind of coarse Marble, of a Substance

A

not

not firm enough to admit of being polish'd, yet harder than our common Quarries afford, and not easily susceptible of Injuries from Weather or outward Accidents.

It was brought to Light by a Farmer, who observing his Plough obstructed by something, through which the Share could not make its Way, order'd his Servants to remove it. This was not effected without some Difficulty, the Stone being three Feet four Inches Deep, and four Feet Square in the Superficies, and consequently of a Weight not easily manageable. However, by the Application of Levers, it was at length raised, and convey'd to a Corner of the Field, where it lay for some Months entirely unregarded: Nor perhaps had we ever been made acquainted with this venerable Relique of Antiquity, had not our good Fortune been greater than our Curiosity.

A Gentleman, well known to the learned World, and distinguish'd by the Patronage of the *Mæcenæ*s of *Norfolk*, whose Name, was I permitted to mention it, would excite the Attention of my Reader, and add no small Authority to my Conjectures, observing, as he was walking that Way, that the Clouds began to gather and threaten him with a Shower, had recourse for Shelter to the Trees under which this Stone happen'd to lie, and sat down upon it in Expectation of fair Weather. At length he began to amuse himself in his Confinement, by clearing the Earth from his Seat with the Point of his Cane; and had continued this Employment some Time, when he observed several Traces of Letters antique and irregular, which by being very deeply engraven were still easily distinguishable.

This Discovery so far rais'd his Curiosity, that going Home immediately,
 he

he procured an Instrument proper for cutting out the Clay, that fill'd up the Spaces of the Letters, and with very little Labour made the Inscription legible, which is here exhibited to the Public :

POST-GENITIS.

*Cum Lapidem hunc, magni
Qui nunc jacet Incola stagni,
Vel Pede Equus tanget,
Vel Arator vomere franget,
Sentiet ægra Metus,
Effundet Patria Fletus,
Littoraque ut Fluctu,
Resonabunt Oppida Luctu :
Nam fœcunda rubri
Serpent per Prata Colubri,
Gramina vastantes,
Flores Fructusque vorantes,
Omnia fœdantes,
Vitiantes, et spoliantes ;*

Quamquam

*Quanquam haud pugnaces,
Ibunt per cuncta Minaces,*

*Fures absque Timore,
Et pingues absque Labore.*

*Horrida dementes
Rapiet Discordia Gentes,*

*Plurima tunc Leges
Mutabit, plurima Reges*

*Natio, conversâ
In Rabiem tunc contremet Ursâ*

*Cynthia, tunc latis
Florebunt Lilia Pratis,*

*Nec fremere audebit
Leo, sed violare timebit,*

*Omnia consuetus
Populari Pascua lætus.*

*Ante Oculos Natos
Calceatos et Cruciatos*

*Jam feret ignavus,
Vetitâque Libidine pravus.*

*En quoque quod Mirum,
Quod dicas denique dirum,*

*Sanguinem Equus fugit,
Neque Bellua victa remugit.*



These Lines he carefully copy'd, accompanied in his Letter of *July 19*, with the following Translation:

T O P O S T E R I T Y.

W *Hene'er this Stone, now hid beneath
the Lake,*

*The Horse shall trample, or the Plough
shall break,*

*Then, O my Country! shalt thou groan
distrest,*

*Grief swell thine Eyes, and Terror chill
thy Breast.*

*Thy Streets with Violence of Woe shall
sound.*

Loud as the Billows bursting on the Ground.

Then

*Then thro' thy Fields shall scarlet Reptiles
stray,
And Rapine and Pollution mark their
Way.*

*Their hungry Swarms the peaceful Vale
shall fright*

*Still fierce to threaten, still afraid to fight;
The teeming Year's whole Product shall
devour,*

*Insatiate pluck the Fruit, and crop the
Flow'r :*

*Shall glutton on the industrious Peasants
Spoil,*

*Rob without Fear, and fatten without
Toil.*

*Then o'er the World shall Discord stretch
her Wings,*

*Kings change their Laws, and King-
doms change their Kings.*

*The Bear enrag'd th' affrighted Moon
shall dread;*

*The Lilies o'er the Vales triumphan
spread;*

*Nor shall the Lyon, wont of old to reign
 Despotic o'er the desolated Plain,
 Henceforth th' inviolable Bloom invade,
 Or dare to murmur in the flow'ry Glade;
 Histortur'd Sons shall die before his Face,
 While he lies melting in a lewd Embrace;
 And, yet more strange! his Veins a Horse
 shall drain,
 Nor shall the passive Coward once com-
 plain.*

I make not the least doubt, but that this learned Person has given us, as an Antiquary, a true and uncontrovertible Representation of the Writer's Meaning, and am sure he can confirm it by innumerable Quotations from the Authors of the middle Age, should he be publickly call'd upon by any Man of eminent Rank in the Republic of Letters; nor will he deny the World that Satisfaction, provided the Animadverter proceeds with that Sobriety and Modesty, with which it becomes every learned Man to treat a Subject of such Importance.

Yet

Yet with all proper Deference to a Name so justly celebrated, I will take the Freedom of observing that he has succeeded better as a Scholar than a Poet; having fallen below the Strength, the Conciseness, and at the same Time below the Perspicuity of his Author. I shall not point out the particular Passages in which this Disparity is remarkable, but content myself with saying in general, that the Criticisms, which there is room for on this Translation, may be almost an Incitement to some Lawyer, studious of Antiquity, to learn *Latin*.

The Inscription which I now proceed to consider, wants no Arguments to prove its Antiquity to those among the learned, who are versed in the Writers of the darker Ages, and know that the *Latin* Poetry of those Times was of a peculiar Cast and Air, not easy to be understood, and very difficult to be imitated, nor can it be conceived that any
Man

Man would lay out his Abilities on a Way of writing, which though attain'd with much Study could gain him no Reputation, and engrave his Chimæras on a Stone to astonish Posterity.

Its Antiquity therefore is out of Dispute, but how high a Degree of Antiquity is to be assign'd it, there is more Ground for Enquiry than Determination. How early *Latin* Rhymes made their Appearance in the World is yet undecided by the Critics. Verses of this kind were call'd *Leonine*, but whence they derived that Appellation the learned *Camden* confesses himself ignorant, so that the Stile carries no certain Marks of its Age. I shall only observe farther on this Head, that the Characters are nearly of the same Form with those on King *Arthur's* Coffin, but whether from their Similitude we may venture to pronounce them of the same Date, I must refer to the Decision of better Judges.

Our

Our Inability to fix the Age of this Inscription necessarily infers our Ignorance of its Author, with Relation to whom many Controversies may be started worthy of the most profound Learning, and most indefatigable Diligence.

The first Question that naturally arises is, Whether he was a *Briton* or a *Saxon*. I had at first conceived some Hope, that in this Question, in which not only the idle Curiosity of Virtuofos, but the Honour of two mighty Nations is concerned, some Information might be drawn from the Word *Patria*, [my Country] in the third Line; *England* being not in Propriety of Speech the Country of the *Saxons*; at least not at their first Arrival. But upon farther Reflection this Argument appear'd not conclusive, since we find that in all Ages, Foreigners have affected to call *England* their Country,

Country, even when like the *Saxons* of old they came only to plunder it.

An Argument in favour of the *Britons*, may indeed be drawn from the Tenderneſs, with which the Author ſeems to lament his Country, and the Compaſſion he ſhows for its approaching Calamities. I, who am a Deſcendant from the *Saxons*, and therefore unwilling to ſay any Thing derogatory from the Reputation of my Forefathers, muſt yet allow this Argument its full Force: For it has been rarely, very rarely, known that Foreigners however well treated, careſſed, enriched, flatter'd or exalted, have regarded this Country with the leaſt Gratitude or Affection, till the Race has by long Continuance, after many Generations, been naturaliz'd and affimilated.

They have been ready upon all Occaſions to prefer the petty Interests of their
own

own Country, though perhaps only some desolate and worthless Corner of the World. They have employ'd the Wealth of *England*, in paying Troops to defend Mud-wall Towns, and uninhabitable Rocks, and in purchasing Barriers for Territories of which the natural Sterility secured them from Invasion.

This Argument, which wants no particular Instances to confirm it, is, I confess, of the greatest Weight in this Question, and inclines me strongly to believe that the benevolent Author of this Prediction must have been BORN a BRITON.

The learned Discoverer of the Inscription was pleased to insist with great Warmth upon the Eymology of the Word *Patria*, which signifying, says he, *the Land of my Father*, could be made Use of by none, but such whose

C Ancestors

Ancestors had resided here : But in Answer to this Demonstration, as he call'd it, I only desired him to take Notice, how common it is for Intruders of Yesterday, to pretend the same Title with the ancient Proprietors, and having just received an Estate by voluntary Grant, to erect a Claim of *hereditary Right*.

Nor is it less difficult to form any satisfactory Conjecture, concerning the Rank or Condition of the Writer, who contented with a Consciousness of having done his Duty, in leaving this solemn Warning to his Country, seems studiously to have avoided that Veneration, to which his Knowledge of Futurity undoubtedly entitled him, and those Honours which his Memory might justly claim from the Gratitude of Posterity, and has therefore left no Trace, by which the most sagacious and diligent Enquirer can hope to discover him.

This

This Conduct alone ought to convince us, that the Prediction is of no small Importance to Mankind, since the Author of it appears not to have been influenced by any other Motive, than that noble and exalted Philanthropy, which is above the narrow Views of Recompense or Applause.

That Interest had no Share in this Inscription, is evident beyond Dispute, since the Age in which he lived received neither Pleasure nor Instruction from it. Nor is it less apparent from the Suppression of his Name, that he was equally a Stranger to that wild Desire of Fame, which has sometimes infatuated the noblest Minds.

His Modesty, however, has not been able wholly to extinguish that Curiosity, which so naturally leads us, when we admire a Performance, to enquire after the Author. Those whom I have con-

sulted on this Occasion, and my Zeal for the Honour of this Benefactor of my Country, has not suffer'd me to forget a single Antiquary of Reputation, have almost unanimously determined, that it was written by a King. For where else, said they, are we to expect that Greatness of Mind, and that Dignity of Expression, so eminently conspicuous in this Inscription.

It is with a proper Sense of the Weakness of my own Abilities, that I venture to lay before the Public, the Reasons which hinder me from concurring with this Opinion, which I am not only inclined to favour by my Respect for the Authors of it, but by a natural Affection to Monarchy, and a prevailing Inclination to believe that every Excellence is inherent in a King.

To condemn an Opinion so agreeable to the Reverence due to the regal Dignity,

nity, and countenanced by so great Authorities, without a long and accurate Discussion, would be a Temerity justly liable to the severest Censures. A supercilious and arrogant Determination of a Controversy of such Importance, would doubtless be treated by the Impartial and Candid with the utmost Indignation.

But as I have too high an Idea of the Learning of my Contemporaries, to obtrude any crude hasty or indigested Notions on the Public, I have proceeded with the utmost Degree of Diffidence and Caution, I have frequently review'd all my Arguments, traced them backwards to their first Principles, and used every Method of Examination to discover whether all the Deductions were natural and just, and whether I was not imposed on by some specious Fallacy; but the farther I carried my Enquiries, and the longer I dwelt upon this great Point,

Point, the more was I convinced, in spite of all my Prejudices, that this wonderful Prediction was not written by a King.

For after a laborious and attentive Perusal of Histories, Memoirs, Chronicles, Lives, Characters, Vindications, Panegyrics and Epitaphs, I could find no sufficient Authority for ascribing to any of our *English* Monarchs, however gracious or glorious, any prophetic Knowledge or Prescience of Futurity. Which, when we consider how rarely regal Virtues are forgotten, how soon they are discover'd, and how loudly they are celebrated, affords a probable Argument at least, that none of them have laid any Claim to this Character. For why should Historians have omitted to embellish their Accounts with such a striking Circumstance, or if the Histories of that Age are lost by length of Time, why was not so uncommon an Excellence

lence transmitted to Posterity in the more lasting Colours of Poetry. Was that unhappy Age without a Laureat? Was there then no *Young* or *Philips*? no *Ward* or *Mitchel* to snatch such Wonders from Oblivion, and immortalize a Prince of such Capacities? If this was really the Case, let us congratulate ourselves upon being reserved for better Days, Days so fruitful of happy Writers, that no Princely Virtue can shine in vain. Our Monarchs are surrounded with refined Spirits, so penetrating that they frequently discover in their Masters great Qualities invisible to vulgar Eyes, and which, did not they publish them to Mankind, would be unobserved for ever.

Nor is it easy to find in the Lives of our Monarchs many Instances of that Regard for Posterity, which seems to have the prevailing Temper of this venerable Man. I have seldom in any of the gracious Speeches delivered from
the

the Throne, and received with the highest Gratitude and Satisfaction by both Houses of Parliament, discover'd any other Concern than for the current Year, for which Supplies are generally demanded in very pressing Terms, and sometimes such as imply no remarkable Solicitude for Posterity.

Nothing indeed can be more unreasonable and absurd, than to require that a Monarch, distracted with Cares and surrounded with Enemies, should involve himself in superfluous Anxieties by an unnecessary Concern about future Generations. Are not Pretenders, Mock-Patriots, Masquerades, Operas, Birth-Nights, Treaties, Conventions, Reviews, Drawing-Rooms, the Births of Heirs, and the Deaths of Queens, sufficient to overwhelm any Capacity but that of a King? Surely he that acquits himself successfully of such Affairs, may content himself

himself with the Glory he acquires, and leave Posterity to his Successors.

That this has been the Conduct of most Princes, is evident from the Accounts of all Ages and Nations, and therefore I hope it will not be thought that I have, without just Reasons, deprived this Inscription of the Veneration it might demand as the Work of a King.

With what laborious Struggles against Prejudice and Inclination, with that Efforts of Reasoning, and Pertinacity of Self-denial, I have prevailed upon myself to sacrifice the Honour of this Monument to the Love of Truth, none who are unacquainted with the Fondness of a Commentator will be able to conceive. But this Instance will be, I hope, sufficient to convince the Public that I write with Sincerity, and that whatever my Success may be, my Intentions are good.

Where we are to look for our Author it still remains to be considered, whether in the high Road of public Employments, or the By-paths of private Life.

It has always been observed of those that frequent a Court, that they soon, by a kind of Contagion, catch the regal

D

Spirit

Spirit of neglecting Futurity. The Minister forms an Expedient to suspend or perplex an Enquiry into his Measures for a few Months, and applauds and triumphs in his own Dexterity. The Peer puts off his Creditor for the present Day, and forgets that he is ever to see him more. The Frown of a Prince, and the Loss of a Pension have indeed been found of wonderful Efficacy, to abstract Mens Thoughts from the present Time, and fill them with Zeal for the Liberty and Welfare of Ages to come. But I am inclined to think more favourably of the Author of this Prediction, than that he was made a Patriot by Disappointment or Disgust. If he ever saw a Court, I would willingly believe, that he did not owe his Concern for Posterity to his ill Reception there, but his ill Reception there to his Concern for Posterity.

However, since Truth is the same in the Mouth of a Hermit, or a Prince, since it is not Reason but Weakness, that makes us rate Counsel by our Esteem for the Counsellor, let us at length desist from this Enquiry, so useless in itself, in

in which we have Room to hope for so little Satisfaction. Let us show our Gratitude to the Author, by answering his Intentions, by considering minutely the Lines which he has left us, and examining their Import without Heat, Precipitancy, or Party-Prejudices, let us endeavour to keep the just Mean, between searching ambitiously for far-fetched Interpretations, and admitting such low Meaning, and obvious and low Sense, as is inconsistent with those great and extensive Views, which it is reasonable to ascribe to this excellent Man.

It may be yet farther asked, whether this Inscription, which appears in the Stone be an Original, and not rather a Version of a traditional Prediction in the old *British* Tongue, which the Zeal of some learned Man prompted him to translate and engrave in a more known Language for the Instruction of future Ages, but as the Lines carry at the first View a Reference both to the Stone it self, and very remarkably to the Place where it was found, I cannot see any Foundation for such a Suspicion.

It remains now that we examine the Sense and Import of the Inscription,

which, after having long dwelt upon it with the closest and most laborious Attention, I must confess myself not yet able fully to comprehend. The following Explications therefore are by no Means lay'd down as certain and indubitable Truths, but as Conjectures not always wholly satisfactory even to myself, and which I had not dar'd to propose to so enlightned an Age, an Age which abounds with those great Ornaments of human Nature, Sceptics, Anti-Moralists and Infidels, but with Hopes that they would excite some Person of greater Abilities, to penetrate farther into the oraculous Obscurity of this wonderful Prediction.

Not even the four first Lines are without their Difficulties, in which the Time of the Discovery of the Stone seems to be the Time assigned for the Events foretold by it.

*Cum Lapidem hunc, magni
Qui nunc jacet Incola stagni,
Vel Pede Equus tanget,
Vel Arator vomere franget,
Sentiet ægra Metus,
Effundet Patria Fletus,*

Lit-

*Littoraque ut Fluctu,
Resonabunt Oppida Luctu.*

*When'er this Stone, now hid beneath the
Lake,*

*The Horse shall trample, or the Plough
shall break,*

*Then, O my Country! shalt thou groan
distrest,*

*Grief in thine Eyes, and Terror in thy
Breast.*

*Thy Streets with Violence of Woe shall
sound.*

Loud as the Billows bursting on the Ground.

*When this Stone, says he, which now
lies hid beneath the Waters of a deep
Lake, shall be struck upon by the Horse,
or broken by the Plough, then shalt thou,
my Country, be astonish'd with Terrors,
and drown'd in Tears, then shall thy
Towns sound with Lamentations, as thy
Shores with the Roarings of the Waves,
These are the Words literally render'd,
but how are they verified? The Lake
is dry, the Stone is turned up, but there
is no Appearance of this dismal Scene.
Is not all at Home Satisfaction and
Tranquillity? all Abroad Submission and
Com-*

Compliance? Is it the Interest or Inclination of any Prince or State to draw a Sword against us? and are we not nevertheless secured by a numerous Standing Army, and a King who is himself an Army? Have our Troops any other Employment than to march to a Review? Have our Fleets encounter'd any thing but Winds and Worms? To me the present State of the Nation seems so far from any Resemblance to the Noise and Agitation of a tempestuous Sea, that it may be much more properly compared to the dead Stilness of the Waves before a Storm.

*Nam fecunda rubri
Serpent per Prata Colubri,*

*Gramina vastantes,
Flores Fructusque vorantes,*

*Omnia fœdantes,
Vitiantes, et spoliantes;*

*Quanquam haud pugnaces,
Ibunt per cuncta Minaces,*

*Fures absque Timore,
Et pingues absque Labore.*

Then

*Then thro' thy Fields shall scarlet Reptiles
 stray,
 And Rapine and Pollution mark their
 Way.*

*Their hungry Swarms the peaceful Vale
 shall fright*

*Still fierce to threaten, still afraid to fight;
 The teeming Year's whole Product shall
 devour,*

*Insatiate pluck the Fruit, and crop the
 Flow'r :*

*Shall glutton on the industrious Peasant's
 Spoil,*

*Rob without Fear, and fatten without
 Toil.*

He seems, in these Verses to descend to a particular Account of this dreadful Calamity ; but his Description is capable of very different Senses with almost equal Probability.

Red Serpents, says he, (*rubri Colubri* are the *Latin Words*, which the poetical Translator has render'd *scarlet Reptiles*, using a general Term for a particular, in my Opinion too licentiously.) *Red Serpents shall wander o'er her Meadows, and pillage and pollute, &c.* The particular

ticular Mention of the Colour of this destructive Viper may be some Guide to us in this Labyrinth, through which, I must acknowledge, I cannot yet have any certain Path. I confess that when a few Days after my Perusal of this Passage, I heard of the Multitude of Lady-birds seen in *Kent*, I began to imagine that these were the fatal Insects, by which the *Island* was to be laid waste, and therefore look'd over all Accounts of them with uncommon Concern. But when my first Terrors began to subside, I soon recollected that these Creatures, having both Wings and Feet, would scarcely have been called Serpents; and was quickly convinced, by their leaving the Country without doing any Hurt, that they had no Quality, but the Colour, in common with the Ravagers here described.

As I am not able to determine any Thing on this Question, I shall content myself with collecting, into one View, the several Properties of this pestiferous Brood, with which we are threatened, as Hints to more sagacious and fortunate Readers. Who when they shall find any *Red Animal* that
ranges

ranges uncontrouled over the Country and devours the Labours of the Trader, and the Husbandman; that carries with it Corruption, Rapine, Pollution and Devastation; that threatens without Courage, robs without Fear, and is pamper'd without Labour, they may know that the Prediction is compleated. Let me only remark farther, that if the Stile of this as of all other Predictions is figurative, the Serpent, a wretched Animal that crawls upon the Earth, is a proper Emblem of low Views and self-interest base Submission, as well as of Cruelty, Mischief and Malevolence.

I cannot forbear to observe in this Place, that as it is of no Advantage to Mankind to be forewarned of inevitable and insurmountable Misfortunes, the Author probably intended to hint to his Countrymen the proper Remedies for the Evils he describes. In this Calamity on which he dwells longest, and which he seems to deplore with the deepest Sorrow, he points out one Circumstance, which may be of great Use to disperse our Apprehensions, and awaken us from that Panick which the Reader must necessarily feel, at the first transient

E

View

View of this dreadful Description. These Serpents, says the Original, are HAUD PUGNACES, *of no fighting Race*: they will threaten, indeed, and hiss, and terrify the Weak, and Timorous, and Thoughtless, but have no real Courage or Strength. So that the Mischief done by them, their Ravages, Devastations and Robberies, must be only the Consequences of Cowardice in the Sufferers, who are harrassed and oppressed only because they suffer it without Resistance. We are therefore to remember whenever the Pest here threatned shall invade us, that Submission and Tameness will be certain Ruin, and that nothing but Spirit, Vigilance, Activity, and Opposition can preserve us from the most hateful and reproachful Misery, that of being plundered, starved, and devoured by Vermin and by Reptiles.

*Horrida dementes
Rapiet Discordia Gentes,
Plurima tunc Leges
Mutabit, plurima Reges
Natio,*

Then

*Then o'er the World shall Discord stretch
her Wings*

*Kings change their Laws, and King-
doms change their Kings*

Here the Author takes a general Survey of the State of the World, and the Changes that were to happen about the Time of the Discovery of this Monument in many Nations. As it is not likely that he intended to touch upon the Affairs of other Countries any farther than the Advantage of his own made it necessary, we may reasonably conjecture, that he had a full and distinct View of all the Negotiations, Treaties, Confederacies, of all the triple and quadruple Alliances, and all the Leagues offensive and defensive, in which we were to be engaged, either as Principals, Accessaries, or Guarrantes, whether by Policy, or Hope, or Fear, or our Concern for preserving the *Ballance of Power*, or our Tenderness for the Liberties of *Europe*. He knew that our Negotiators would interest us in the Affairs of the whole Earth, and that no State could either rise or decline in Power, either extend

or lose its Dominions, without affecting Politics and influencing our Councils.

This Passage will bear an easy and natural Application to the present Time, in which so many Revolutions have happened, so many Nations have changed their Masters, and so many Disputes and Commotions are embroiling almost in every Part of the World.

That almost every State in *Europe* and *Asia*, that is, almost every Country then known is comprehended in this Prediction may be easily conceived, but whether it extends to Regions at Time undiscovered, and portends any Alteration of Government in *Carolina* and *Georgia*, let more able or more daring Expofitors determine.

— *Conversâ*

*In Rabiem tunc contremet Urfâ
Cynthia,*

*The Bear enrag'd, th' affrighted Moon
shall dread ;*

The Terror created to the Moon by the Anger of the Bear, is a strange Expression, but may perhaps relate to the
Appre-

Apprehensions raised in the *Turkish* Empire, of which a Crescent or new Moon is the imperial Standard, by the increasing Power of the Empress of *Russia*, whose Dominions lie under the Northern Constellation called the *Bear*.

— *Tunc latis*
Florebunt Lilia Pratis,

The Lilies o'er the Vales triumphant
spread;

The Lillies borne by the Kings of *France* are an apt Representation of that Country; and their flourishing over wide extended Valleys, seems to regard the new Increase of the *French* Power, Wealth and Dominions, by the Advancement of their Trade, and the Accession of *Lorain*. This is at the first View an obvious, but perhaps for that very Reason not the true Inscription. How can we reconcile it with the following Passage.

Nec fremere audebit
Leo, sed violare timebit,
Omnia consuetus
Populari Pasqua lætus.

Nor

*Nor shall the Lyon, wont of old to reign
Despotic o'er the desolated Plain,
Henceforth th' inviolable Bloom invade,
Or dare to murmur in the flow'ry Glade;*

In which the Lyon that used at Pleasure to lay the Pastures waste, is represented as not daring to touch the Lillies, or murmur at their Growth: The Lyon, 'tis true, is one of the Supporters of the Arms of *England*, and may therefore figure our Countrymen, who have in ancient Times made *France* a Desert. But can it be said, that the Lyon dares not murmur or rage (for *fremere* may import both) when it is evident, that for many Years this whole Kingdom has murmur'd! however, it may be at present calm and secure, by its Confidence in the Wisdom of our Politicians and the Address of our Negotiators.

*Ante Oculos Natos
Calceatos et Cruciatos
Jam feret ignavus,
Vetitâque Libidine pravus.*

*Hii tortur'd Sons shall die before his Face,
While he lies melting in a lewd Embrace;
Here*

Here are other Things mentioned of the Lyon equally unintelligible, if we suppose them to be spoken of our Nation, as that she lies sluggish, and depraved with unlawful Lusts, while his Off-spring is trampled and tortur'd before his Eyes. But in that Place can the *English* be said to be trampled or tortur'd? Where are they treated with Injustice or Contempt? What Nation is there from Pole to Pole that does not reverence the Nod of the *British* King? Is not our Commerce unrestrained? Are not the Riches of the World our own? Do not our Ships sail unmolested, and our Merchants traffick in perfect Security? Is not the very Name of *England* treated by Foreigners in a Manner never known before? Or if some slight Injuries have been offered, if some of our petty Traders have been stopped, our Possessions threaten'd, our Effects confiscated, our Flag insulted, or our Ears crop'd, have we lain sluggish and unactive? have not our Fleets been seen in Triumph at *Spithead*? did not *Hosier* visit the *Bastimentos*, and is not *Haddock* now stationed at *Port Mahon*?

En

*En quoque quod Mirum,
Quod dicas denique dirum,
Sanguinem Equus fugit,
Neque Bellua victa remugit.*

*And, yet more strange ! his Veins a Horse
shall drain,
Nor shall the passive Coward once complain.*

It is farther asserted in the concluding Lines, that the Horse shall suck the Lyon's Blood. This is still more obscure than any of the rest, and indeed the Difficulties I have met with ever since the first Mention of the Lyon are so many and great, that I had, in utter despair of surmounting them, once desisted from my Design of publishing any Thing upon this Subject ; but was prevailed upon by the Importunity of some Friends, to whom I can deny nothing, to resume my Design; and I must own that nothing animated me so much as the Hope they flatter'd me with, that my Essay might be inserted in the Gazetteer, and so become of Service to my Country.

That a weaker Animal should suck the Blood of a stronger without Resistance

istence is wholly improbable and inconsistent with the Regard for Self-Preservation, so observable in every Order and Species of Beings. We must therefore necessarily endeavour after some figurative Sense not liable to so insuperable an Objection.

Were I to proceed in the same Tenour of Interpretation, by which I explained the Moon and the Lilies, I might observe that a Horse is born in the Arms of H ———. But how then does the Horse suck the Lyon's Blood? Money is the Blood of the Body politic.—— But my Zeal for the present happy Establishment will not suffer me to pursue a Train of Thought that leads to such shocking Conclusions. The Idea is detestable, and such as, it ought to be hoped, can enter into the Mind of none but a virulent Republican, or bloody Jacobite. There is not one honest Man in the Nation unconvinced how weak an Attempt it would be to endeavour to confute this Insinuation. An Insinuation which no Party will dare to abet, and of so fatal and destructive a Tendency, that it may prove equally dangerous to the Author whether true or false.

F

As

As therefore I can form no Hypothesis on which a consistent Interpretation may be built, I must leave these loose and unconnected Hints entirely to the Candour of the Reader, and confess that I do not think my Scheme of Explication just, since I cannot apply it throughout the whole, without involving myself in Difficulties, from which the ablest Interpreter would find it no easy Matter to get free.

Being therefore convinc'd upon an attentive and deliberate Review of these Observations, and a Consultation with my Friends, of whose Abilities I have the highest Esteem, and whose Impartiality, Sincerity, and Probity I have long known and frequently experienc'd, that my Conjectures are in general very uncertain, often improbable, and sometimes little less than apparently false, I was long in Doubt whether I ought not entirely to suppress them, and content myself with publishing in the *Gazetteer*, the Inscription, as it stands engraven on the Stone, without Translation or Commentary, unless that ingenious and learned Society, should favour the World with their own Remarks.

To

To this Scheme, which I thought extremely well calculated for the public Good, and therefore very eagerly communicated to my Acquaintance and Fellow Students, some Objections were started, which as I had not foreseen, I was unable to answer.

It was observed first, That the *Daily Dissertations* publish'd by that Fraternity, are written with such Profundity of Sentiment, and fill'd with such uncommon Modes of Expression, as to be themselves sufficiently unintelligible to vulgar Readers, and that therefore the venerable Obscurity of this Prediction, would much less excite the Curiosity and awaken the Attention of Mankind, than if it were exhibited in any other Paper, and plac'd in Opposition to the clear and easy Stile of an Author generally understood.

To this Argument, formidable as it was, I answer'd, after a short Pause, that, with all proper Deference to the great Sagacity and advanc'd Age of the Objector, I could not but conceive that his Position confuted itself, and that a Reader of the *Gazetteer*, being by his own Confession accusom'd to encounter Dif-

difficulties, and search for Meaning where it was not easily to be found, must be better prepar'd than any other Man for the Perusal of these ambiguous Expressions. And that, besides, the Explication of this Stone, being a Task, which nothing could surmount but the most acute Penetration join'd with indefatigable Patience, seem'd in reality reserv'd for those who have given Proofs of both in the highest Degree by reading and understanding the *Gazetteer*.

This Answer satisfied every one but the Objector, who with an Obstinacy, not very uncommon, adher'd to his own Opinion, tho' he could not defend it; and not being able to make any Reply, attempted to laugh away my Argument, but found the rest of my Friends so little dispos'd to jest upon this important Question, that he was forced to restrain his Mirth, and content himself with a sullen and contemptuous Silence.

Another of my Friends, whom I had assembled on this Occasion, having own'd the Solidity of my Answer to the first Objection, offer'd a second, which in his Opinion could not be so easily defeated.

“ I

“ I have observ’d, *says he*, that the
 “ Essays in the *Gazetteer*, tho’ written
 “ on very important Subjects by the
 “ ablest Hands which Ambition can
 “ incite, Friendship engage, or Money
 “ procure, have never, tho’ circulated
 “ through the Kingdom with the ut-
 “ most Application, had any remark-
 “ able Influence upon the People. I
 “ know many Persons of no common
 “ Capacity, that hold it sufficient to pe-
 “ ruse these Papers four times a Year;
 “ and others who receive them regu-
 “ larly, and without looking upon them,
 “ treasure them under Ground for the
 “ Benefit of Posterity. So that the In-
 “ scription may, by being inserted there,
 “ sink once more into Darknefs and Ob-
 “ livion, instead of informing the Age,
 “ and assisting our present Ministry in
 “ the Regulation of their Measures.”

Another observ’d that nothing was
 more unreasonable than my Hope that
 any Remarks or Elucidations would be
 drawn up by that Fraternity, since their
 own Employments do not allow
 them any Leisure for such Attempts.
 Every one knows that Panegyric is in its
 own Nature no easy Task, and that to
 defend

defend is much more difficult than to attack; consider then, says he, what Industry, what Affiduity it must require, to praise and vindicate a Ministry like ours.

It was hinted by another, that an Inscription which had no Relation to any particular Set of Men amongst us, but was compos'd many Ages before the Parties, which now divide the Nation, had a Being, could not be so properly convey'd to the World by Means of a Paper, dedicated to political Debates.

Another to whom I had communicated my own Observations in a more private Manner, and who had inserted some of his own Arguments, declar'd it, as his Opinion, that they were, tho' very controvertible and unsatisfactory, yet too valuable to be lost; and that tho' to insert the Inscription in a Paper of which such Numbers are daily distributed at the Expence of the Public, would doubtless be very agreeable to the generous Design of the Author, yet he hop'd that as all the Students, either of Politics or Antiquities, would receive both Pleasure and Improvement from the Dissertation, with which it is accompanied,

none

none of them would regret to pay for so agreeable an Entertainment.

It cannot be wonder'd that I have yielded at last to such weighty Reasons, and such insinuating Compliments, and chosen to gratify at once the Inclinations of Friends, and the Vanity of an Author. Yet I should think I had very imperfectly discharg'd my Duty to my Country, did I not warn all whom either Interest or Curiosity shall incite to the Perusal of this Treatise, not to lay any Stress upon my Explications.

How a more compleat and indisputable Interpretation may be obtain'd, it is not easy to say. This will, I suppose, be readily granted, that it is not to be expected from any single Hand, but from the joint Enquiries and united Labours of a numerous Society of able Men, instituted by Authority, selected with great Discernment and Impartiality, and supported at the Charge of the Nation.

I am very far from apprehending that any Proposal for the Attainment of so desirable an End, will be rejected by this inquisitive and enlightned Age, and shall therefore lay before the Public the Project which I have form'd and matur'd
by

by long Consideration, for the Institution of a Society of Commentators upon this Inscription.

I humbly propose, that thirty of the most distinguish'd Genius be chosen for this Employment, half from the Inns of Court, and half from the Army, and be incorporated into a Society for five Years, under the Name of the SOCIETY OF COMMENTATORS.

That great Undertakings can only be executed by a great Number of Hands, is too evident to require any Proof; and I am afraid all that read this Scheme will think that it is chiefly defective in this Respect, and that when they reflect how many Commissaries were thought necessary at *Seville*, and that even their Negotiations entirely miscarried, probably for Want of more Associates, they will conclude that I have propos'd Impossibilities, and that the Ends of the Institution will be defeated by an injudicious and ill-tim'd Frugality.

But if it be consider'd, how well the Persons I recommend must have been qualify'd by their Education and Profession for the Provinces assign'd them, the Objection will grow less weighty than it appears.

appears. It is well known to be the constant Study of the Lawyer to discover in Acts of Parliament, Meanings which escap'd the Committees that drew them up, and the Senates that pass'd them into Laws, and to explain Wills into a Sense wholly contrary to the Intention of the Testator. How easily may an Adept in these admirable and useful Arts, penetrate into the most hidden Import of this Prediction? A Man accustom'd to satisfy himself with the obvious and natural Meaning of a Sentence, does not easily shake of his Habit, but a rue-bred Lawyer never contents himself with one Sense when there is another to be found.

Nor will the beneficial Consequences of this Scheme terminate in the Explication of this Monument; they will extend much farther: For the Commentators having sharpen'd and improv'd their Sagacity by this long and difficult Course of Study, will, when they return into public Life, be of wonderful Service to the Government, in examining Pamphlets, Songs, and Journals, and in drawing up Informations, Indictments, and Instructions for special Juries. They

G

will

will be wonderfully fitted for the Posts of Attorney and Solicitor General, but will excell above all, as Licensers for the Stage.

The Gentlemen of the Army will equally adorn the Province to which I have assign'd them, of setting the Discoveries and Sentiments of their Associates, in a clear and agreeable Light. The Lawyers are well known not to be very happy in expressing their Ideas, being for the most Part able to make themselves understood by none but their own Fraternity. But the Geniusses of the Army have sufficient Opportunities by their free Access to the Levee and the Toilet, their constant Attendance on Balls and Assemblies, and that abundant Leisure which they enjoy beyond any other Body of Men, to acquaint themselves with every new Word and prevailing Mode of Expression, and to attain the utmost Nicety and most polish'd Prettiness of Language.

It will be necessary, that during their Attendance upon the Society, they be exempt from any Obligation to appear on Hyde-Park; and that upon no Emergency, however pressing, they be call'd away

away from their Studies, unless the Nation be in immediate Danger by an Insurrection of Weavers, Colliers, or Smugglers.

There may not perhaps be found in the Army such a Number of Men, who have ever condescended to pass through the Labours and irksome Forms of Education in Use among the lower Classes of People, or submitted to learn the mercantile and plebeian Arts of Writing and Reading; I must own, that tho' I entirely agree with the Notions of the Usefulness of any such trivial Accomplishments in the military Profession, and of their Inconsistency with more valuable Attainments, tho' I am convinc'd that a Man who can read and write becomes, at least, a very disagreeable Companion to his Brother Soldiers, if he does not absolutely shun their Acquaintance, that he is apt to imbibe from his Books odd Notions of Liberty and Independency, and even sometimes of Morality and Virtue, utterly inconsistent with the desirable Character of a pretty Gentleman: Tho' Writing frequently stains the whitest Finger, and Reading has a natural Tendency to cloud the Aspect,

Aspect, and depress that airy and thoughtless Vivacity, which is the distinguishing Characteristic of a modern Warrior, yet on this single Occasion I cannot but heartily wish that by a strict Search, there may be discover'd in the Army fifteen Men who can write and read.

I know that the Knowledge of the Alphabet is so disreputable among these Gentlemen, that those who have by ill Fortune formerly been taught it, have partly forgot it by Disuse, and partly conceal'd it from the World; to avoid the Railleries and Insults to which their Education might make them liable, I propose therefore, that all the Officers of the Army may be examin'd upon Oath one by one, and that if fifteen cannot be selected who are at present so qualify'd, the Deficiency may be supply'd out of those who having once learned to read, may perhaps, with the Assistance of a Master, in a short Time refresh their Memories.

It may be thought, at the first Sight of this Proposal, that it might not be improper to assign to every Commentator a Reader and Secretary; but it may
be

be easily conceiv'd, that not only the Public might murmur at such an Addition of Expence, but that by the Unfaithfulness or Negligence of their Servants, the Discoveries of the Society may be carry'd to foreign Courts, and made Use of to the Disadvantage of our own Country.

For the Residence of this Society, I cannot think any Place more proper than *Greenwich-Hospital*, in which they may have thirty Apartments fitted up for them, that they may make their Observations in private, and meet once a Day in the painted Hall to compare them.

If the Establishment of this Society be thought a Matter of too much Importance to be defer'd till the New Buildings are finish'd, it will be necessary to make Room for their Reception, by the Expulsion of such of the Seamen as have no Pretensions to the Settlement there, but fractur'd Limbs, Loss of Eyes, or decay'd Constitutions, who have lately been admitted in such Numbers, that it is now scarce possible to accommodate a Nobleman's Groom, Footman, or Postilion, in a Manner suitable
to

to the Dignity of his Profession, and the original Design of the Foundation.

The Situation of *Greenwich* will naturally dispose them to Reflection and Study; and particular Caution ought to be us'd, lest any Interruption be suffer'd to dissipate their Attention, or distract their Meditations: For this Reason, all Visits and Letters from Ladies are strictly to be prohibited; and if any of the Members shall be detected with a Lap-dog, Pack of Cards, Box of Dice, Draught-Table, Snuff-box, or Looking-Glass, he shall for the first Offence be confin'd for three Months to Water-Gruel, and for the second be expell'd the Society.

Nothing now remains, but that an Estimate be made of the Expences necessary for carrying on this noble and generous Design. The Salary to be allow'd each Professor cannot be less than 2000 *l.* a Year, which is indeed more than the regular Stipend of a Commissioner of Excise; but it must be remembered, that the Commentators have a much more difficult and important Employment, and can expect their Salaries but for the short Space of five Years; whereas a Commissioner (unless he imprudently

prudently suffers himself to be carry'd away by a whimsical Tendernefs for his Country) has an Establishment for Life.

It will be necessary to allow the Society in general, 30000 *l.* yearly for the Support of the public Table, and 40000 *l.* for secret Service.

Thus will the Ministry have a fair Prospect of obtaining the full Sense and Import of the Prediction, without burthening the Public with more than 650000 *l.* which may be paid out of the sinking Fund; or if it be not thought proper to violate that sacred Treasure by converting any Part of it to Uses not primarily intended, may be easily rais'd by a general Poll-Tax, or Excise upon Bread.

Having now compleated my Scheme, a Scheme calculated for the public Benefit, without Regard to any Party, I intreat all Sects, Factions, and Distinctions of Men among us, to lay aside for a Time that Party-feuds and petty Animosities, and by a warm Concurrence on this urgent Occasion, teach Posterity to sacrifice every private Interest to the Advantage of their Country.

F I N I S.

prudently suffer himself to be carried
away by a whimsical Feltiment for his
Country has an Establishment for Life.
It will be necessary to allow the So-
ciety in general, 30000 yearly for the
support of the public Table and 40000
for secret Service.

Thus will the Ministry have a fair
Prospect of obtaining the Bill Senate and
Import of the Parliament without fur-
thering the Public with more than
60000 which may be paid out of the
Sinking Fund; or if it be not thought
proper to violate that sacred Trust by
converting any Part of it to this not
primarily intended Use, he really raised
by a general Poll Tax or Excise upon
Brewery.

Having now communicated my Scheme
Scheme calculated for the public Be-
nefit, without regard to any Party, I
trust all Secret Factions will Dismiss
those of Men among us, to lay aside for
a Time their Party-funds and petty An-
imosities, and by a warm Conference
on this urgent Occasion, reach Possibility
to sacrifice every private Interest to the
Advantage of their Country.

P. I. W. I. 1790